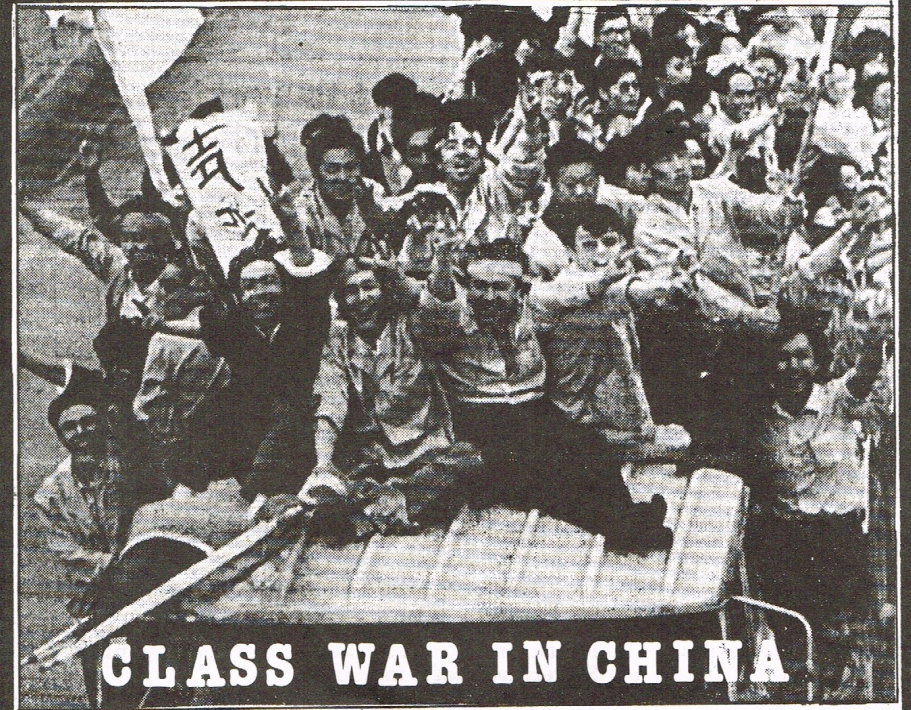


Communist
Bulletin

No. 14 Summer 1989 50p



CLASS WAR IN CHINA

- * **BLOODBATH in VENEZUELA**
- * **POLAND and HUNGARY**
- * **The MILIEU and REGROUPMENT**
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CAPITALIST MASSACRE IN PEKING

Early this morning (Sunday June 4th) the Chinese bourgeoisie finally revealed to the entire world its historic and moral bankruptcy. As tens of thousands of workers and students demonstrated in Tiananmen Square in Peking, continuing a protest that has been in the eyes of the world for weeks now, the ageing hoodlums who control the Chinese capitalist state and all its agencies of repression unleashed their armed thugs. Tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers crashed through both barricades, and the people at them. Thousands of armed troops fired volley after volley of automatic fire into the thousands there and the hundreds of thousands who quickly accumulated in the centre of the city. The dense masses of protestors practically unarmed as they were could not but sustain appalling casualties. Thousands have been killed, tens of thousands wounded, many dying before they could reach the hospitals on makeshift stretchers made of rickshaws, doors and park benches. The emergency operating theatres were still working at full stretch fifteen hours later.

thronged to the centre of the city even after the army had taken it and the troops continued to fire killing men women and children in volleys of mass fire from the square. Throughout the city the fighting continued. On the student campus on the outskirts of the city more tanks and troops appeared beating and killing everybody they could find. When morning broke the fighting and the killing continued throughout the centre of the city.

As we write almost twenty four hours after the attack the city is still in utter chaos with hundreds if not thousands of vehicles blazing and the streets littered with the dead. Tonight reports say that there have been mass demonstrations in support in many cities throughout China, specifically in Wuhan, Changsha and Shanghai. In Hong Kong 200,000 plus staged protests outside the Chinese government buildings, some attempting to storm it. There seem still to be hundreds of thousands on the streets of Peking confronting the



Dead students lie beside their crushed bicycles near Tiananmen Square the morning after tanks and troops moved in

Some fled at the approach of the first troops but many, many more fought back. Using their bare hands, iron bars and a few molotov cocktails the first few vehicles were destroyed but against the tanks and lorry loads of firing soldiers even the most combative cannot win. As the hours wore on the shooting did not cease. Tens of thousands

troops and secret police overwhelmed by rage and their inability to fight back effectively. Deng and his fellow gangsters may have won the battle, but at what a cost! Their bankruptcy has been exposed for all to see. They have opened a Pandora's box which may yet engulf them. For in China now the bourgeoisie are exposed for what they

really are - throughout the world: a bunch of murderous thugs who will willingly murder thousands, millions rather than lose power. For the bourgeoisie elsewhere in the world the events of last night bear a terrible lesson. No matter how cowed and oppressed are your slaves, the proletariat they will arise against you. This is your future and the future of your rotten system. And for the proletariat last night also has important lessons throughout the world. No matter how the bourgeoisie seek to disguise their rule whether by exhortation, democratic facade or whatever when the crunch comes this is what they look like, this is what they do, this is what they are **really** like, armed, murdering, dripping with blood, steeped in gore, utterly bestial. China is not some anomaly, China is the future for both proletariat and bourgeoisie stripped naked, exposed for all to see.

Whether the movement can regain the impetus after such events remains to be seen but it is clear that the very bulk and weight of the struggles has brought home to capitalism the fragility of the social nexus. All layers of Chinese society have raged against the corruption and violence of the bourgeoisie. This has not arisen as a defence of an abstract ideal called 'freedom' which the western bourgeoisie would have us believe, but was the product of the material realities of capitalist society in both the liberal democracies and the one-party states of the East.

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

For the moment the Chinese state is dominated by that evil smelling piece of humanity Deng Xiaoping whose decaying faculties mirror the system which he oversees. He came to the forefront of his bourgeoisie in the late 1970s after the death of his fellow mobster Mao Zedong. Deng was a so-called "capitalist roader" (a term which obscures the fact that China had never broken free from capitalism). During the Cultural Revolution he had often been out of favour arguing as he did against Mao's



policy of autarkic accumulation. Contrary to popular belief China is not a superpower (except in the sense of Third Worldism). Mao had tried to remedy this situation by forcing exploitation via closing down borders and rapacious attacks upon the Chinese working class. Like Stalin had done before in Russia agricultural collectivisation became a key element in this process. But this was all to no avail. No matter how much the working class was exploited there was simply no way that a sufficient surplus could be generated to fund superpower status. The Cultural Revolution was one response to this situation. No matter how tight internal controls became, no matter how vicious the regime became, it found itself stymied. the only thing it gave to the world was the only thing that decadent capitalism gives, the deaths of tens of thousands and concentration camps for millions.

It was from the maelstrom of the Cultural Revolution that Deng arose. He was a man not thrown by the violence of the Cultural Revolution, nor by the barbarous exploitation it imposed. His argument with Mao had been about how best to exploit the workers and the most efficient strategy for "modernising" the economy and making it more competitive. He favoured opening up Chinese borders, allowing foreign capital in and at the same time encouraging a freeing of internal market mechanisms.

Under his leadership the collectivised system of farming was largely dismantled being replaced by a series of "contracting households" which were given a degree of freedom to compete in the marketplace. Initially this uncertainty led to increased production in agriculture but like all capitalist policies it did little for the population at large. One consequence was a massive increase in those "waiting for employment", a nice euphemism for the unemployed of which any western capitalist would be proud. Up to 30% of the rural labour force was forced off the land. On top of this the freeing of markets within agriculture led to massive fluctuations in production: grain harvests peaked in 1984 but since then have fallen by 25 million tonnes per year. These and other problems in agriculture have had a severe impact upon the Chinese working class. Inflation in foodstuffs is rampant, especially so in the black market which is such an integral part of daily life.

On the industrial front the reforms of Deng have had equally disastrous results. In the early 1980s the state encouraged foreign capital to invest in China. For the western bourgeoisie this must have seemed a great opportunity (Deng became Time magazine's Man of the Year), an apparently quiescent proletariat which would unquestioningly accept high levels of exploitation. Parallel with this policy the Deng led bourgeoisie used deficit financing to promote industrial growth. Inevitably this led to an 'overheating' of the economy and an ever increasing balance of trade deficit. The Chinese state has found its foreign currency reserves shrinking and its indebtedness to western capital has grown. Consequently it is forced to look to any means of securing hard currency even where it hits its own policy of modernisation. For example, the vast deposits of brown coal at the open cast mine Pingshio are being rapidly developed with a little help from that one-time friend of Lenin, Arnold Hammer. However rather than being able to fully use this to meet internal needs the state is forced to sell the coal to Japanese and other interests. This has exacerbated an already difficult situation. Power cuts are now a regular occurrence which makes the lives of the workers miserable as well as disrupting industrial production. As with agriculture so with manufacturing industry. Inflation is rampant. More and more the working class in China has found its living standards being attacked as the bourgeoisie makes it pay for economic crisis.

Needless to say the upper echelons of the state have protected themselves from the economic effects of their policies. The new open door policy has presented them with golden opportunities to accumulate millions and to protect and promote their private family interests. That great believer in democracy, the man with a lump in his throat and a tear in his eye, Zhao Ziyang, made certain that in the midst of the misery he promoted, he was secure. He led the development of Hunan Island as a safe port and economic base for foreign capital. He ensured that officials were put in charge who would cream off wealth for him as

well as themselves and at the same time gave them ideal conditions for the exploitation of the working class. This was an offer which Japanese capital found impossible to resist. Some companies were so keen in investing in imposing misery upon workers that they took out leases of 80 years on land.

These are the economic factors which underpin the mass demonstrations in China.

THE STRUGGLE

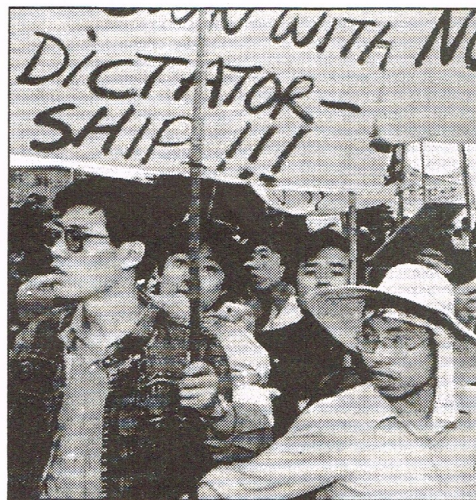
It was a spectacle which took revolutionaries in the west by surprise. Literally millions involved. Just to see the sheer strength in numbers was breathtaking and a welcome corrective to the too often espoused Euro-centric vision of revolutionaries which tends to gauge the state of class struggle by what's happening in the west. Whilst large sections of the working class in Europe have been cowed by the ideological and economic barrage unleashed upon them in the past ten years we find that the most harsh of Stalinist regimes is walking a knife edge with its proletariat. The Chinese working class is giving an example of militancy which should become an inspiration to its brothers in the West.

Undoubtedly the student movement played a major role in the demonstrations and strikes. It has been at the forefront of the activity in Tiananmen square, the hunger strikes etc. and it is the students who are mostly quoted by western commentators. To listen to the reports by western correspondents it would seem as if the students were simply an expression of some Chinese Glasnost. Certainly, Gorbachov's visit to China and the bourgeois policies he is pursuing in Russia has acted as a focus for discontent. But Glasnost does not explain the demonstrations. Students like other sections of the population are suffering as a result of the general crisis of the Chinese economy. On top of this they have problems particular to their situation. For a start, of those Chinese over 15 years old over 30% of them are illiterate, reflecting the status given to education, only 3.7% of G.N.P. allotted to it. Consequently, the social and economic horizons of students are very limited. The Chinese state is now looking for new ways of cutting back on the costs of education. It is now pursuing policies akin to those being promoted by Thatcher in Britain. Like its British counterparts the bourgeoisie in China wants to force those in higher education to carry the costs of it. For example it is moving towards students being self-financing, putting tuition fees up and encouraging foreign capital to set up schools in China. Having struggled to gain entry to higher education students find that they have to endure appalling living conditions - as many as six occupying one small dormitory. And the teachers fare little better. Even at the prestigious Qinghua University, Peking 40% of the teaching staff live in overcrowded and sub standard accommodation. With these circumstances facing them it is not at all surprising that students should kick against the corrupt state.

The students are not alone in their struggle. Their anger at the corruption within the state and their increasing poverty has found an echo in the working class. Unfortunately the bourgeois press in the west is not at all at ease reporting the struggles of the proletariat, it finds it easier to record the demands of the "literate" and professional groups. But even with the very limited

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reporting of the workers' actions it is abundantly clear that millions of them have responded to the attacks being launched against the students. And again as with the students it is not a question of Glasnost. When Bush said of the struggle that it was "an inexorable movement towards freedom and free enterprise in the Communist world" he was throwing an ideological blanket over the realities of Chinese capitalism. The working class in struggling against the repressive and vicious policies of an economy in crisis. It is fighting to defend its economic position. For example, continuing a long history of militant struggle, Shanghai workers were out on strike in December 1988 demanding that their wages be protected against inflation; not demanding some abstraction called democracy, or freedom but rather fighting against the economic imperatives of the capitalist system. And so behind the working class' solidarity with the students there lies opposition to an economic system which forces poverty upon it.



From the very outset the students have found support from workers. When the first threat of intervention by troops became apparent lorry drivers and bus drivers used their vehicles to block the streets and stop the movement of the military. At the same time railway workers were insisting that students travelling to Peking should be given free passage. Below ground the same militant solidarity was to be found among subway workers who cut power to stop trains using the "secret" system below the streets. Delegates were also sent from many factories expressing support for the students' actions, most importantly from the Capital Steelworks, which employs 200,000 in Peking. Similar expressions of solidarity were to be found throughout China, partial general strikes paralysing cities and regions.

There have been a number of other manifestations within the class struggle which, as yet, have received little coverage in the bourgeois press. There has been the appearance of something called the **Autonomous Workers Group**. But what this is we have been unable to discover. It could be a clearly politicised workers group (as seemed to have appeared during the Cultural Revolution - the Shen Wu-Lien organisation of Hunan province). We have also seen the emergence of something called

the Peking Independent Trade Union Federation. This body seems to be advocating something which is a cross between a political party and western style trade unionism.

The state did not take kindly to the working class' presence in the student demonstrations. Workers at the Capital Steelworks were singled out by the state police and beaten and threatened with the sack for associating with opposition to Deng and his crew. Similarly members of the Trade Union Federation were arrested. And so the pattern developed. The bourgeois state cannot tolerate opposition from the working class. Whilst focus is upon the plight of the students in Tiananmen Square repression of workers goes on behind the scenes for the state knows that its fate depends upon the proletariat.

In essence the mass strike has shown weakness and strength. Its strength is apparent not only in the numbers involved but also in the way in which the initiative was seized by students and workers. Forms of defence militias were built; the securing and distribution of foodstuffs was organised as was transport, leaflets etc. Constant debate went on at the height of the struggle. These elements are essential features of any assault on the capitalist state. Through self-organisation consciousness and confidence grows. It was this which helped give birth to the soviet structure, the form of organisation appropriate to proletarian revolution.

However this self organisation is not in itself enough. Positive political direction must also be there. At the moment in China this seems to be missing. There appears to be either a reluctance or an inability on the part of the students to move beyond a fractional critique of the state. For the moment everything points to them being locked into demands for "freedom", and a reorganisation of the party structure and the sacking of the ageing Deng and his henchman Li Peng. Great humour gets displayed - mocking the motto of Deng students say "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white so long as it resists" - but this will not finish the state simply a faction within it. It was certainly possible that the gangster Zhao could have won the internal struggle. Then what for the students? One capitalist would have replaced another. This inability to see beyond existing structures is apparent in statements like "We think only the Party has the power to solve our problems, but only if the people believe in the Party". Grotesquely it is a notion which finds its mirror image in the words of Li Peng "our Party is a party in power and our government, a people's government."

The struggle has to start somewhere. It does not begin 'tabula rasa' but comes from within a bourgeois world. Inevitably this critique takes with it elements of the capitalist world. Bourgeois ideology figures prominently, especially so in mass immediate struggles, whether it be calls for the 'Little Father' the Tsar to save the people or for democracy to be introduced. One way forward is open when revolutionary groups exist and can intervene directly. No evidence of such a group existing in China has yet emerged (although we would be delighted to be proven wrong here). Where this is the case then direction is given and generated by it. Clearly, where revolutionaries are not to be found then the problems facing workers and students are more profound. They have to rely on themselves for building a critique of the state which goes beyond reformism and points to a way of rising above the capitalist system. One thing is absolute in both situations, namely, it is

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only through the working class that the problem of capitalism can be solved. Only it can challenge the state; only it has the economic power to destroy capitalism and to pose an alternative mode of social organisation. In the absence of revolutionary fractions it becomes more pressing that students look to the working class and ally with its demands. Resist the extension and deepening of exploitation; resist the imposition of austerity. At the end of the day the state cannot but confront the class which opposes the drive for profit.

We salute the militancy of Chinese workers and students and look forward to the day when their struggles are taken up by their brothers in the west.

A LESSON FROM HISTORY

In January 1905 a huge demonstration of almost 200,000 workers and others, led by the ex-police agent/priest Gapon, marched to the Tsar's palace in St. Petersburg to humbly request that he aid them in their plight, that he change his government, that he reform the state which inflicted misery and oppression on them. Many, if not most, believed that their 'Little Father' had their interests at heart and would heed their plea for reform.

But the Tsar and the Tsarist state was incapable of the flexibility needed to present even a facade of reforms by substituting one set of butchers for another. The mass demonstration was met by soldiers, cossacks and secret police. Their pleas were met by fusillades of shots which slaughtered them as they stood and their demonstration was routed by charges of cossacks. Thus began the 1905 revolution in Russia.

From this experience the bourgeoisie and reformists in Russia concluded that revolutionary means had failed in Russia and either despaired of change or sought to change things by gradual reforms.

For the proletariat and its fractions however the events of Bloody Sunday proved once and for all that the state could not be reformed. That the butchers who ruled Russia would have to be deposed and eliminated by revolutionary means, by the mass strike and revolution of the proletariat. "We no longer have a Tsar" said even Gapon after the massacre. The culmination of the understanding of what had happened, what had been revealed about their rulers and the way forward for the proletariat in Russia came with the revolutions of 1917 and the destruction of Tsarist power.

In Peking today the proletariat have had a bitter lesson. They have surely learned that the position of supplicant before the decaying corpse of capitalism is no longer tolerable, that the rotting carcase of capital can only respond to the demand to 'reform' itself with tanks and bullets. The time for the capitalist state to reform itself is long gone. What is necessary is to destroy it. It is to be hoped that that lesson is now being learned by the proletariat of Peking and all the other cities of China and that the development of consciousness derived from bitter, bitter experience which enabled the Russian proletariat to launch the proletarian revolution in 1917, will now take place among workers throughout China. Once again we salute the workers of China, heroically trying to halt tanks with iron bars and molotov cocktails this morning. Next time we expect them to win.

Flett/Ingram

WORKING AGAINST THE LEFT IN MANCHESTER

For some ten years I've been employed by Manchester's Labour led Council. When I first started, the old guard were in power and apart from a short break, had been for many years. Then following an internal coup the left wing faction took over. This was part of a series of changes which saw other councils like Lambeth, Liverpool, Sheffield and Brent etc. move to the left. The new Manchester administration made all sorts of promises to the 'voters' and its own employees alike encapsulated in the slogan "Defending Jobs - Improving Services" to be found on all its letterheads, billboards and transport. In fact the slogan is about all that's left and a few enterprising rebels have managed to get rid of that remaining insult to their intelligence in some places. So what is the reality behind the glossy facade?

Well I remember when the Left first took over that major cuts were made in the provision of house improvement grants. This seemed to go unnoticed by most people not directly affected, perhaps because both the Council and its more extreme left critics were fixated on council housing. The fact that some of the poorest workers actually lived in areas of high owner occupation in the inner city and were seriously affected by these cuts was ignored.



Certainly more workers were employed at first which was good news for the growing unemployed, although this wasn't matched by the supposed major improvements in services. The Council went out of its way to integrate numerous constituencies into the umbrella of Council organisations through a myriad of special committees and new units. These deal with trade union consultation, tenant consultation, equal opportunities (including race, women, gays, the disabled), anti-nuclear issues, energy policy and more. The actual expenditure on these ventures has been low but the political capital substantial. The policy has been quite successful despite the efforts of the local right wing press to embarrass the Council at every opportunity.

Of course the Council are right when they say that

the primary responsibility for the increasing cut-backs in local authority finance lies with the Tory government. But the deliberate intention of the Council's political strategy has been to focus workers opposition to these cutbacks on the Council itself rather than relying on their own autonomous organisation and activity. The Tories may well regard such councils, in narrow party political terms, as an obstacle to their complete control of economic and social policy, but in practice such councils function as a useful safety valve for the frustrations generated by the government's attacks on workers. The division of labour between the Tory central government with its absolute majority in Parliament and strong local Labour councils opposed to them but legally and financially dependant on central government, has had the hidden benefit to British capitalism as a whole of disorientating and diffusing opposition.

This is best illustrated by the role of the trade unions. At national level they have been marginalised by the Tories, being squeezed out of many of their former positions as junior managers of capital. Locally, in Labour Council areas the opposite has happened. The already close relationship between the Labour Party and the Unions has become ever cosier. This has been just

as much the case with non-affiliated unions like the white collar NALGO as with the other unions.

The disastrous result of all this has been a more than usually heavy smothering of any tentative moves by workers to oppose the present massive round of cut-backs in jobs and services.

All the unions in Manchester managed to persuade their members, with dire threats of massive compulsory redundancies and the like, to accept cooperation with the Council's cut-backs. Thus the majority agreed on general terms on cooperation, but inevitably, as the effects of the cut-backs have become apparent in practice, groups of workers have become disgruntled and started to organise a fight back. In each case the union, from its paid officials to local shop stewards, have gone out of their way to stop disputes altogether or, where that has proven impossible, to at least contain

them. All the old recipes have been used - accusations of not going through the correct procedures, being undemocratic, threats of isolation, being misled by political hotheads (the unpopular SWP being useful in this respect), upsetting the officials behind the scenes negotiations, etc. etc. A few examples of this process will illustrate my point.

In my own workplace we were threatened with a 50% reduction in the number of jobs and pressure for more 'flexibility'. We got together in a meeting of both NALGO and NUPE members and decided to oppose the cuts, draw up a list of demands and lobby the Housing Committee during work time and in the sensitive period just before the local elections. The meeting was the best attended for ages and there was a confident mood amongst the majority which pulled along the few waverers. The meeting in fact decided to seek the support of the unions but to get on and organise the action ourselves. Unfortunately after this promising, if cautious, start things just went downhill. The NUPE steward (a Labour Party activist), called a separate meeting of some of her members and persuaded them to back off from the lobby. Those of us in NALGO, for our sins, reaffirmed our action despite this set-back, and decided to call on individual NUPE members to join us. The NALGO convenor had refused to call an emergency meeting of all the stewards to discuss our demands but when he realised we were going ahead anyway he was down like a shot with a delegation to heavy us. Initially they tried to get our steward to just call the whole thing off. When he refused to do that the convenor addressed the NALGO members themselves. By a series of threats and pleadings and a promise to get our steward a hearing at Committee, and despite my vocal opposition, the majority backed down and agreed to call off the lobby. In fact that last promise turned out to be false and the convenor subsequently managed to head off all further attempts to do anything. The result of this experience was that a few people saw the need to stick to our guns in any future action and organise ourselves but unfortunately others just became demoralised.

A similar process occurred when another group of housing workers, where lots of staff had left, decided to impose their own work priorities and refuse to answer Councillor inquiries during the election. The convenor and stewards refused to support them and insisted on their working normally until "all the procedures had been gone through".

In both cases the official management were able to sit back and let the Unions do their job for them.

Another more serious dispute arose in the Cleansing Department. Faced with sudden and massive job losses amongst drivers, with the remaining drivers being regularly moved around at a moments notice, one depot went out on strike. They immediately sent out pickets and delegations to other depots and soon the whole department was on all out strike. The unions immediately went into action. Unable to actually stop the strike they set out to isolate it. Their main aim was to ensure the action did not turn into outright opposition to the 'agreed' cuts policy but concentrated on 'bad management' of the IMPLEMENTATION of the cuts. In this way other council workers were more likely to see the dispute as a purely Cleansing issue. A few environmental health officers did get involved but that was all. The strike remained solid for over a week until the union managed to get a slim majority

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In favour of an offer of a few temporary drivers and a few quid for clearing the backlog of rubbish. The strike ended with a lot of recriminations and frustration.

The same process of diversion and isolation has gone into other areas. For instance the opposition to the anti-gay clause 28 of the Local Government Act has been largely focussed on "pressurising" the Council not to implement the clause, rather than going directly to groups of workers on the front line. Much of the opposition has relied on Council funding in one form or another. This has weakened any tendencies towards autonomous organisation and activity essential in dealing with the real effects of prejudice on a day-to-day level.

The council has also had some success in integrating council tenant opposition to the effects of government legislation aimed at breaking up council estates (and in the process some of the material basis of collective action) and increasing housing costs to workers generally. Of course the council is genuinely opposed to the government measures but not necessarily for the same reasons as tenants. Tenant opposition to the Council itself has thus been submerged in an anti-Tory crusade which Labour politicians hope to tap in the next round of elections.

The Council's organisational umbrella which I've described has been in place for several years now. It is firmly rooted with much overlapping of personnel between Council workers in the special units, Councillors, Labour Party activists, tenant association organisers, campaign organisers, Union officials and so on. They provide an extensive informal network for behind the scenes manipulation.

All of this is a formidable barrier to autonomous anti-capitalist activity. But I don't want to paint too gloomy a picture. The influence of the Council and the Trades Unions is not all powerful, their control by no means complete. As their false opposition to the attacks on council workers and other groups of workers fails to deliver the goods and the attacks themselves become more widespread there is a real potential for the emergence of an INDEPENDENT working class movement. In the meantime we must do all in our power to expose the role of the Left Councils, Trade Unions and campaign groups. Even in this task however, we need a lot more communication and cooperation amongst the existing small groups of revolutionary communists and Independent militants.

A Council Worker.

(article submitted by 'Subversion')

NALGO - National and Local Government Officers Union.

NUPE - National Union of Public Employees.

P.S. Since writing this there have been further Wildcat strikes in Housing and Recreational Services Departments. The latest dispute is over the staffing of local 'mini-town halls' including longer opening hours during the week and Saturday morning working. The Union/Management deal was rejected at Branch meeting and a boycott of all new posts maintained. Now the branch officials are pursuing a strike ballot of the whole membership, (most of whom are not immediately affected) knowing that the majority won't support a strike at this stage, in order to get their crummy deal accepted. Their apparent militancy is in fact a shabby manoeuvre to get round the growing opposition to their policies of compromise with the Council.

7. THE MEANING OF BRADFORD

AN ADDRESS TO COUNCIL WORKERS

WHAT'S AT STAKE

THOUSANDS OF JOBS DOWN THE DRAIN; COUNCIL HOUSES SOLD; CHILDRENS HOMES SHUT; COUNCIL RENTS UP; LIBRARIES CLOSED; ADVICE CENTRES CUT; COMPULSORY TRANSFERS.

This is just part of a long list of cuts being made, not only by the Tory scumbags in Bradford, but also by hypocritical LABOUR councils from Manchester and Salford in the North-west to Brent, Camden and Hackney, amongst others, in the South-east.

THE DIFFERENCE IN BRADFORD

Bradford has the distinction of adding to this list the privatisation of a whole range of services. Unlike the Left, we don't think it matters if we are exploited by state or private employers. But the effects of privatisation are even more job losses, poorer wages and conditions and reduced services at higher cost, and are an attempt to further divide us. This is what we oppose.

These measures are being prepared under present and proposed legislation which will begin to affect ALL Councils of whatever political persuasion from next year. Central government intends to bring in privatisation bit by bit over several years to divide and weaken opposition to it. The enthusiasm of Bradford Tories has led them to try everything at once. For the moment other, wetter, Tory Councils will bide their time awaiting the outcome of the 'Battle of Bradford'.

'TEST CASE'

The Tories, Labour and the Unions all recognise Bradford as a 'test case'. But for them the test is how quickly these measures can be introduced NOT whether they will be introduced at all. Both Labour and the Unions accept the 'inevitability' of their introduction. Their vociferous campaigns of opposition, which we are all urged to join, are nothing more than words. They cover up their practical co-operation in the smooth introduction of competitive tendering and privatisation.

CUTS AND PRIVATISATION HAVE TO BE OPPOSED WHETHER CARRIED OUT ENTHUSIASTICALLY BY RIGHT WING TORIES OR RELUCTANTLY BY LEFT WING LABOURITES WITH BIG MAJORITIES OR NARROW ONES

THE ISSUE IS NOT DEMOCRACY BUT CLASS INTERESTS

THE STATE, NATIONAL AND LOCAL IS A CAPITALIST STATE WHICHEVER POLITICAL PARTY ADMINISTERS IT

THE FIGHT BEGINS HERE

Bradford could be a big mistake for the Tories. The real impact of their legislation will be dramatically highlighted for all to see and could galvanise a REAL opposition to their whole programme of anti-working class measures.

This will only happen if workers reject the leadership, organisation and politics of the Labour Party and the Unions.

Recent experiences like the Miners strike, Wapping and the Ferry strike show that no single group of workers can defeat the determined and combined efforts of the employers, the State, the media and the Unions to restructure the economy at our expense.

Nothing will happen this time unless the Bradford workers give a lead by taking all out strike action. But if they allow that action to be controlled by the Labour Party and the Unions they will end up simply adding to the list of recent courageous but inevitable defeats which our class has suffered.

LABOUR DIVIDES US

If the Bradford workers strike their action will be applauded by Labour politicians and Union leaders whilst at the same time they busy themselves ensuring that 'outside' support remains largely symbolic. They will encourage a siege mentality amongst Bradford workers and seek to isolate them from other workers by concentrating on the maverick qualities of Bradford Tories rather than the common factors which unite us. Those of us working for Labour councils which mouth opposition to the cuts will be told to hold our fire and co-operate with our 'friendly' employer. This is a straightforward case of CLASS COLLABORATION with our enemy. The opposition of 'strong' local Labour councils to Tory central government with its absolute majority in Parliament is illusory while councils are legally and financially dependent on central government. This opposition has the hidden benefit to British capitalism as a whole of disorientating and diffusing any real opposition.

A COMMON FIGHT

All council workers must respond to the challenge of Bradford, not simply to defeat Bradford council but to defeat the power behind the council and force the government to pull back from its onslaught on all of us.

That means striking against central and local government irrespective of the political colour of the administration.

It means organising and controlling the strike movement ourselves independently of the Labour Party and the Unions. Action may start off locally and within the Union framework. We must push it outside that framework and beyond our local areas or face defeat. A nationwide strike movement of this kind is possible and would set free vast reservoirs of frustration and anger felt by other sections of the working class who would be encouraged to take up their own demands.

We need to organise now for:

- a national strike of all council workers
- immediate extension of council workers' strikes to other workers in dispute
- regular mass meetings of all strikers irrespective of Union membership
- directly elected strike committees
- working class community links based on opposition to cuts in services, the poll tax, ET etc.,
- a demand for the end of privatisation, job losses and cuts in services

WE MUST BEGIN TO POSE OUR HUMAN NEEDS AGAINST THE NEEDS OF THE MARKET AND THE STATE.

Written by Council workers

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CAPITALIST BLOODBATH

in VENEZUELA

The exploitation of a natural resource such as oil is a two edged sword for national capitals. If there are the advantages of a balance of payments surplus, large government revenues and credit worthiness in the world's money markets, there is also a down side. A strong currency pulls in imports and discourages exports, leading to a destruction of the industrial base. The wealth generated is invested overseas where higher rates of return can be obtained.

This has been an underlying tendency in the British economy over the last two decades. Now that oil prices are falling because of stagnation in the world economy, the balance of trade is slipping into the red and only ever increasing interest rates are preventing a flight from the pound. The UK economy is again being revealed as one of the weakest in the league of rich nations. What may still lie in the future for Britain can be seen in stark clarity in another national capital whose ruling class saw 'black gold' as its passport to prosperity.

In the mid-seventies the high price of oil allowed the Venezuelan bourgeoisie to line its pockets. The wealthiest minority were able to indulge themselves in luxury imports and to invest abroad, particularly in the USA. To the abhorrence of this section of the bourgeoisie a leftist government was elected which found it politically expedient to spread a little of the wealth to the other classes in society. This was in the form of subsidies on staple products, cheap prices for petrol and rudimentary welfare provisions.

At the same time the distortions of the oil boom were undercutting the foundations of the economy with the result that today unemployment stands at 25%. Also an underclass of poor was growing, populating the slums and the shanty towns around Caracas and the other major cities. Nevertheless the government was re-elected on a platform of letting the 'good times' continue. But as oil prices turned down this was funded more and more by borrowing from foreign bankers.

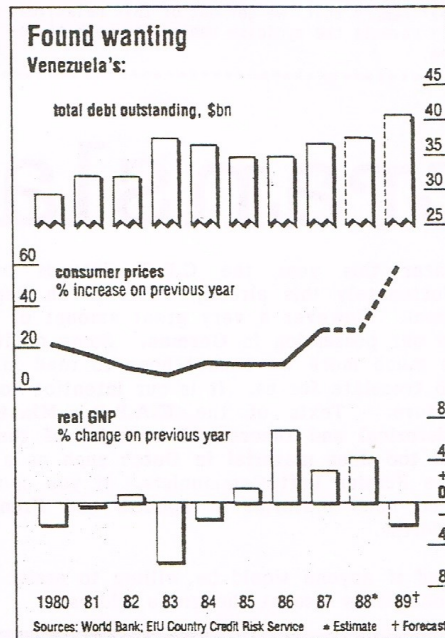
For Venezuela, oil exports peaked in 1978 at \$19 billion. In 1988 they were \$8 billion and 43% of all foreign earnings went to servicing debts to the Western banks of \$38 billion. At the beginning of this year the logic of capitalism finally caught up with the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. Harsher policies were dictated by the International Monetary Fund as a condition of new loans to bolster the national reserves.

As always the way out of the crisis of the bourgeoisie was to cut the living standards of the working class. Subsidies were cut leading to price rises outstripping wages. The poor were to be driven below the level at which they barely survived. But this time the victims refused to place their heads meekly on the block.

Incensed by increases half as much again as those announced by the government on foodstuffs and bus fares, by the blatant speculation of shopkeepers creating shortages by holding back goods until the price rises were authorised, goaded by the corruption of the state, the political parties and the trade unions, and by the flaunting of their wealth by the rich, the urban slums erupted. For a few days at the beginning of March, in what one reporter called a 'national uprising', the poor from the shanty towns rioted, burning shops and public transport. Together with the other exploited classes they looted those goods which their poverty and the profiteers had denied them.

BLOODBATH

The response of the state was immediate and brutal. 10,000 troops were flown to the capital and set about the bloody reassertion of order. Demonstrators and rioters were shot down in the streets, looters were pursued into the slums and killed in their own homes. A state of emergency was imposed which suppressed meetings and banned extra-parliamentary opposition groups. Civil rights were suspended allowing arrest on sight and detention without trial. This bloodbath left 1000 dead and perhaps 7000 in detention.



Meanwhile government spokesmen were ready with their responses: that the uprising was provoked by 'subversive groups, that the IMF and the foreign bankers were to blame and that Western capitals would have to go easy in the future. Palliatives were offered in the form of wage rises but these were already in the pipeline, and price freezes but at the new level.



Painful austerity

The Venezuelan and the world bourgeoisie claimed to be surprised by the response which the austerity measures provoked. But perhaps not too surprised after the recent spate of hunger riots in Sudan, Jordan and Algeria. The Venezuelan President Perez' remark that "we got out of this relatively well" reveals the cynicism behind the mask of remorse.

LESSONS

Events in Venezuela hold a number of object lessons for anyone taken in by the propaganda of the defenders and reformers of capitalism. Those who think that capitalism no longer 'oozes blood and muck from every pore' must think again when they see how the bourgeoisie imposes its order on society by repression. Those who believe that capitalism can still improve humanity's lot can see how capitalist relations of production lead to the squandering of natural resources while driving the mass of people deeper into poverty.

Those who claim that democratic government means that power and prosperity are more evenly spread in society are proved false for Venezuela is not a military dictatorship like Chile, nor is it in the hands of the cocaine barons. Its democratic institutions are held up as a model for other countries in South America. Now many of those people who quietly queued to vote for Perez' party lie dead, shot by his troops.

Finally there are those who put their faith in parties or politicians of the left. But again Venezuela shows the poverty of this view. Perez calls himself a democratic socialist, he is a welcome participant at meetings of the Socialist International where he rubs shoulders with the Kinnocks and Mitterands of the West. But when capitalist logic dictates these professed friends of the workers will defend to the last drop of workers' blood the class system which they represent. That Perez has done what was expected of him in Venezuela is demonstrated in an article in the Economist where the fiercest critics of his government, the wealthy faction of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie are recommended to close ranks with him now and give him their support.

Sinclair

translate?

Later this year the **C.B.G.** intends publishing **Reply to Lenin** by **Herman Gorter**. Fortunately this already exists in an English translation which we have typeset in book form. However a very great amount of important material from the German Left exists in our possession in **German**. Some of it we have managed to have translated but there is much more we cannot hope to read in English unless we can discover comrades willing to translate for us. It is our intention to publish a collection of this material in the near future. Texts of the **K.A.P.D., Minutes of their First Three Congresses** and **later historical and theoretical material of the first revolutionary wave** all awaits translation. **So too does material in Dutch** such as a biography of Gorter and material in **Russian** on the Russian Left Communists. If you could help us in translating, **from any language** (we also need material in **Spanish** and **French** translated) please contact us at the group address.

And if anyone would be willing to assist us financially with the above publications please contact us also at the group address.